

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt *HS*

SUBJECT: Verification Panel Meeting, Friday, July 30;
NSSM-132, Soviet Proposals for Five Power
Nuclear Conference.

At this meeting there are two aspects (decisions) you want to cover:

1. What approach do we take in next weeks toward the Soviet proposals; how do we respond initially, and beyond?

-- The issue here is not really one of disarmament or arms control, but a political decision to lean slightly toward the USSR or remain as neutral as possible, and in this way avoid seeming to bring pressure on Peking.

2. Do we want or need to study further, some of the substantive issues that might conceivably be the subject of a conference in the unlikely event that all parties agree.

I. The US Approach

The study presents six alternatives ranging from unqualified acceptance to straightforward rejection. Assuming we want to do neither, our essential choices are:

-- Conditional acceptance: conditions could be that all powers agree to a conference and agree on a reasonable agenda, or only that all powers agree to a conference.

-- No Definitive Response, but a mildly positive "interim" reply and no further action.

If we want to show some sign of encouragement to the USSR then the "conditional acceptance" would be the way to do so; at the same time the conditions would mitigate suspicions in China that we were colluding with the USSR against known Chinese objections to entire project.

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On the other hand, if we prefer to remain noncommittal, then the stalling tactic with an "interim" reply is preferable. (In this case you might want to convey our reply through private channels to China.)

Another approach, canvassed in the study is to take the initiative and propose a meeting of "experts" to discuss only one proposal, namely a five-power agreement to guard against accidental nuclear war.

-- given the origin of this subject -- in the US-Soviet SALT context -- the Chinese, at least, and possibly France, would balk; on the other hand, it would rule out extraneous political or propagandistic approaches. Since this approach would go a long way toward involving the US as co-sponsor of the five-power conference, it has a distinct anti-Chinese overtone, even if the Chinese saw some merit in the idea of agreement on measures to prevent accidental war.

Next Steps -- US Reply

If you wish to adopt the stalling tactic, what needs to be done is approve an interim reply. A tentative reply has already been discussed with the French and UK and discussed in NATO. The current version which you have approved includes the following main points:

- (1) US is still studying, but considers subject worthy of serious consideration;
- (2) Such a conference would require careful preparation and a consensus among all five powers on what measures were feasible for discussion;
- (3) The interest of the non-nuclear states must be taken into account;
- (4) Conference should not prejudice SALT or detract from the CCD; and
- (5) The US presupposes all five powers would be willing to attend.

If you wish to accept the conference, but attach conditions, we could either amend this "interim reply" to state the conditions of our acceptance, or proceed with an interim reply and then draft a more definitive acceptance and statement of conditions.

(NOTE: Even the interim as formulated by State tends to foreshadow conditions of unanimous consent of all powers and consensus on agenda.)

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Agency Views

We know of no great disputes over the middle-ground alternatives, though there was little attempt to stimulate agency differences. State could live with the stalling tactic, but probably has a slight preference for a conditional acceptance. ACDA, as expected, would go for a conditional acceptance, but both State and ACDA are somewhat intrigued with the idea of a five power conference on preventing accidental war and establishing a hot line.

II. Substantive Issues for a Conference

The study includes six possibilities, some included for intellectual neatness, and not because they are realistic or even attractive for US interest. (There are, nevertheless, JCS and Defense objections included in the study to some of these measures.)

The issues are which, if any, of these possibilities are both feasible from what we know of the positions of the other powers, and in the interest of the US. There is little exploration in the study of what, exactly, our interests are in a five power conference, other than bringing China into a disarmament forum. This latter objective, while presumably a long term aim, in the short run may actually complicate relations with China depending on the forum, sponsorship and timing. The doubtful proposition that all nuclear powers must necessarily share a common interest runs throughout the study.

1. Measures to avoid and reduce the risk of accidental war:

- the US-Soviet agreement could serve as a rough model;
- the net practical effect, if accepted, would be that all the nuclear powers would exchange information on missile launches outside national territory.
- the clause (not yet settled in Helsinki) requiring data exchange in "other situations" would almost certainly raise problems for China vis a vis Moscow.

The issue for further consideration is how the prospective SALT agreement on this subject would have to be modified to include all nuclear powers, and what obligations and gains would be involved for us.

2. Expanded hot line communication between nuclear powers:

- the main problem is the political one; does China want to join the "nuclear club" in this way, or to remain aligned with the non-nuclear world.

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The latter has been Peking's policy and as SALT has progressed, Peking has become more vociferous in denouncing "superpowerism."

-- It is possible we would reserve this as a bilateral subject with China.

The technical issue for further study would be the feasibility of a five way circuit, perhaps via Intelsat and Molniya, or a simple land line link.

-- This might be reserved for Sino-US bilaterals.

3. A proposal in the field of security assurances:

-- While not well defined in the study, the idea is to come up with a counter to the old idea of non first use of nuclear weapons, which inevitably would be surfaced by the Soviets or perhaps the Chinese.

-- Non first use in any variant is violently opposed in the Pentagon on the grounds it destroys the theory and effectiveness of flexible response and weakens deterrence.

-- Further study of this issue seems warranted only as a defense against Soviet proposals. Treating this seriously, however, leads inexorably into issues of withdrawal of foreign bases, de-nuclearization of regions, or limits on operational areas, etc.

Defense believes this is not a promising subject for five power consideration and JCS objects to inclusion of it for further consideration.

4. Five Declaration to support the principle of Non-Proliferation:

-- The main problem, again, is political: does China want to associate with the non-proliferation principle. For years it has opposed the concept, though in practice it supports it.

-- Pressing this approach could force the Chinese into a rejection, which, of course, is what the Soviets want.

5. A proposal not to deploy further ABMs.

6. Limitation of Strategic Offensive Forces:

-- These two might be intellectually laudable from an arms control point of view, but almost totally unrealistic, politically.

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-- Nevertheless, on the outside chance of a zero ABM in SALT, -- the prerequisite to a five power ban -- it might be worth a short survey of what would be involved in defining and verifying a ABM ban in China, UK, France, etc.

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In sum, there are no real five-power arms control prospects, given the disparity among the powers, other than those that are related to arrangements such as hot lines, accidents, non first use, non-proliferation. The central issue is whether China wishes to join the nuclear club in some formal way, and, for us, whether we want to begin, now, the gradual process of drawing Peking in this direction. If we do have such an interest, then we also face the delicate issue of conciliating our main non-nuclear allies, who would undoubtedly see the emergence of a worldwide nuclear directorate as an incentive to create their own nuclear capability. It is no accident that the four and five power nuclear conference originated with De Gaulle.

Next Steps

Assuming we might become involved in explorations of an agenda, you may want to ask for "position papers" on the following to be submitted to you. (This could be done in a follow on directive):

- More detailed examination of a five power accidents treaty.
- Technical examination of feasibility of five power hot lines.
- (optional) Study of problem in generalized non first use security assurance agreement.
- (optional) Problems of defining, verifying five-power ABM ban.

Your book includes:

- Talking points for the meeting, along the lines of this memorandum;
- Analytical summary of NSSM 132 Study;
- NSSM 132 Study; and
- Text of US Position, used in NATO consultation (including interim reply).

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